

# AVERY

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## MESSENGER

SPRING 2019

THE PATH SHE PAVED FOR AVERY

The Legacy of  
DR. MYRTLE G. GLASCOE

June 13, 1936–March 5, 2019

DR. PATRICIA WILLIAMS LESSANE  
A Journey of Innovation,  
Scholarship & Advocacy

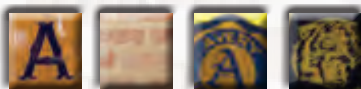
Avery Research Center as a  
Catalyst for Archival and Museum  
Careers: An Interview with  
Jasmine Utsey

Race and Social Justice Initiative:  
Student Leadership Awards

Archival Renovations and Space  
Update

Archives News  
News Briefs & More





A Publication of the

## **AVERY RESEARCH CENTER**

FOR AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY AND CULTURE

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## **ON THE COVER**

The cover image features Avery Research Center's founding director, Dr. Myrtle G. Glascoe, on the steps of the Avery Research Center at the 1990 Grand Opening Ribbon Cutting Ceremony. Dr. Glascoe, born in Washington, D.C., attended Howard University; received a Master's Degree from the University of Pennsylvania; and a PhD from



Harvard University. She was a social worker and educator and was very active in the Civil Rights Movement. Dr. Glascoe's signature work during her tenure at the Avery Research Center included highlighting Gullah history and culture and fusing important Avery Research Center/Lowcountry African Diaspora links by connecting the ancestral dots between people of the Lowcountry and Sierra Leone, West Africa.

The full image, as shown here, very aptly spotlights Sierra Leonean educator and diplomat Dr. George Carew addressing the attendees at the Avery Research Center's opening ceremony. Dr. Carew has taught at Howard University, Spelman College, the University of Sierra Leone at Freetown, and the University of the District of Columbia. As a diplomat, Dr. Carew served as Sierra Leone's Deputy High Commissioner in London, and Sierra Leone's Ambassador to the United States in Washington, D.C.

*Photo Credit: Avery Research Center for African American History and Culture Photograph Collection.*



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## **AVERY RESEARCH CENTER**

**DR. PATRICIA WILLIAMS LESSANE**

**FORMER EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR—PARTING MESSAGE**

Dear Friends,

In thinking about what is to be my last message as executive director of the Avery Research Center, I could not help but reflect on my time at Avery—what started out as an exciting professional opportunity turned out to be a life-changing personal journey filled with awe-inspiring experiences and personal growth. Many people have remarked about what I have brought to Avery, but honestly, Avery did more for me than I could ever have done for such a historic and important institution to Charleston history and wider African diasporic history by extension. It truly has been an honor to work at Avery, immersed in tangible vestiges of African-American history and concrete evidence of the colossal contributions our forebears made to the foundation of the Holy City, as well as the collective cultural, spiritual, linguistic, culinary, and socioeconomic fabric of the nation.

When I first started at Avery, I would open public programs by saying, “I’m Patricia Williams Lessane, executive director of the Avery Research Center, and I have the best job in the world!” I meant that. Coming to Avery was a dream come true for me. The opportunity to meld my love for museums with my background in anthropology and African-American Studies was what I had envisioned for myself as a college student, although at that point, the Schomburg Center in New York City and the DuSable Museum in Chicago were my only frames of reference. Little did I know that all those days and nights I spent in the Fisk University Special Collections and the Carl Van Vechten Gallery were preparing me for some of the most important work I would ever do!

But that’s how life works. There are no coincidences. People enter our lives for reasons and for seasons, and I have been indelibly changed by the people I have met here in Charleston, as well as the people whose lives and accomplishments are chronicled within the pages of the Avery Research Center collections. I will never be the same.

My time at Avery taught me what true leadership is and shaped my pedagogy, politics, and philosophical worldview. Working alongside my staff, I learned to be a servant leader in our collective goal to preserve, protect, make public, and leverage the precious treasures housed at the Avery Research Center. From Deborah Wright and Curtis Franks, I witnessed the application of Black Power and Civil Rights ideologies to museum and archival work. In doing so, I honed my own Black political and Black feminist worldview and applied it to my teaching philosophy and my approach to my museum and public history vocation.

I will miss Avery, my students and colleagues at the College, and the extensive network of friends and extended kin I have made here in Charleston. I am thankful to all who have poured into me. In the words of the popular Gospel song, “I know I been changed!”

Thank you all.  
pwl



## **AVERY INSTITUTE**

**TONY BELL**

**PRESIDENT**

Greetings from the Avery Institute Board!

There were fifteen members of the Avery Institute Board for 2018-2019: Catherine Boags, Walter G. Brown Jr., John Buncum, Kimberly Greene, Richard Gutowski, Roslyn Harper, Minerva T. King, Daniel E. Martin Jr., Charles McKenzie, Yvette Metz, Barbara Nelson, Priscilla McLeod Robinson, Kathy E. Smalls, Vicki Davis Williams, and myself, Tony Bell. The officers for this year were Tony Bell, President; Roslyn Harper, Vice President; Catherine E. Boags, Treasurer; John Buncum, Financial Secretary; Kimberly Greene, Secretary; and Walter G. Brown Jr., Advisor.

The first half of 2019 mainly focused on preparing for our second annual Kentucky Derby Party fundraiser. Also, we are proud to have assisted in funding the Avery Research Center’s upgraded storage units in the amount of \$25,000. Finally, we will be donating to the Avery Research Center’s Director’s Excellence Fund on behalf of Dr. Patricia Lessane to commemorate her legacy of exceptional leadership. We hope to see you at the annual meeting on Saturday, June 22, 2019. Please check our website at [www.averyinstitute.us](http://www.averyinstitute.us) for details, as well as pictures from the fundraiser.

Until next time,  
Tony Bell



# AVERY ARCHIVES NEWS

## ARCHIVAL RENOVATION AND SPACE UPDATES

by Aisha N. Haykal, Manager of Archival Services

The Avery Research Center for African American History and Culture is delighted to announce the philanthropic contribution in memory of College of Charleston Distinguished Alumnus Joseph "Joe" Warren Cabaniss '47.



Cabaniss was a student and teacher at the College. As a student leader, Cabaniss's tenure at the College was marked by academic success and social activism. Upon graduation, Cabaniss received the Robert Worth Bingham Prize for a speech advocating the end of racial segregation. After earning his Juris Doctor degree from the University of South Carolina, Cabaniss became an attorney, faithfully serving his community. He was the chair of the Charleston Council on Human Relations and he also served on a committee appointed by Governor McNair to help resolve the 1969 strike by hospital workers at MUSC. The gift, which was donated by his sons, and funding from the Avery Institute will support the storage and shelving needs of the Avery Research Center as it works to preserve the history of African-American experiences in the Lowcountry.

As the Avery Research Center has grown, it has acquired shelving and storage from a variety of areas in order to store materials. Now because of the renovations, we have the opportunity to evaluate our current situation and select shelving and storage for our collections that will do justice to the rich history we are preserving. Additionally, due to the physical structure of the historic building, the Avery Research Center is constrained in how and where we can store collections. Thus, for the past four months, the Avery Research Center staff has met with Kristin Ormand of Patterson Pope to strategize and plan the new spatial layouts for our library, archival, and artifact storage needs.

This has included researching and reviewing best practices for archival and museum facilities in order to align our storage to standards. The plans and decisions made will ensure the security, safety, and future growth of the collections. Some of these decisions include relocating collections in the building to store similar sizes and formats together, and collocating collections that are in the same stage of processing. One of the additional benefits is that access will also improve.

In addition to the new storage and shelving, we are developing an enhanced reading room to include security, efficient storage options, and updated technology and seating. These features will increase collaboration and provide a more comfortable space for researchers to review items.

The above plans and changes are connected to the renovation that has been ongoing since winter/spring 2018. As a part of that project, we have completed the Heating, Ventilation, Air Conditioning replacement, exterior and interior painting, and installation of new windows and carpeting.

These changes at the Avery Research Center are exciting and allow us to serve our stakeholders better. To learn more about supporting the Avery Research Center in this critical time of transformation and physical renewal, visit [giving.cofc.edu/avery](http://giving.cofc.edu/avery).



Michael Simmons holding  
his ExCEL Award,  
March 2019

## MICHAEL SIMMONS: AVERY RESEARCH CENTER STUDENT INTERN

Michael Simmons, a senior at the College of Charleston who is majoring in History and minoring in African American Studies, interned at the Avery Research Center for the Spring 2019 semester. Simmons chose to intern at the Avery Research Center because of its rich history in the area and its current place as a research site. Simmons says, "it's rejuvenating to enter this site and [be] surrounded by vast amounts of Black history that can be found in the form[s] of artifacts, images, documents, and microfilm. Interning here has allowed my passion for Black history to expand and has given me a sense of purpose."

During his internship, Simmons processed the collection of the Charleston Area Branch of the Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH). The Charleston Area Branch of ASALH was established in 1995. Its collection includes history of the branch through documents, images, conference records, flyers, and newspapers clippings.

Simmons won the Lucille S. Whipper Outstanding Student Award at the Excellence in Collegiate Education and Leadership (ExCEL) Awards in March, 2019. He is scheduled to graduate in December 2019.

The range and depth of our work with the Avery Research Center and the Race and Social Justice Initiative (RSJI) have exceeded what were already high expectations for our experience. The Avery Research Center has afforded us the opportunity to serve its mission: to collect, preserve, and promote the history and culture of the African diaspora in the Lowcountry and beyond. Through hands-on work in the archival collections and with the public events the Avery Research Center and RSJI sponsor, we have gained knowledge of the mutual influences of history and activism.

One of our first projects was to organize recently acquired, unprocessed materials from the Harleston-Boags Funeral Home, which will complement the Harleston Funeral Home Papers, 1900-1977. Founded in 1896, Harleston Funeral Home operated as Harleston-Boags Funeral Home from 1978 until its closing in 2013. We combed through 2,520 records of the deceased, the funeral home's financial records, related correspondence, obituaries, photographs, and newspaper clippings. On a spreadsheet, we alphabetized and tracked thirty-nine boxes for this collection. Once fully processed, these records will help genealogical and/or academic researchers access a cross section of African-American life in the Lowcountry since the late 1970s.

Processing archival collections requires the creating a finding aid, which is "a description of records that gives the repository physical and intellectual control over the materials and that assists users to gain access to and understand the materials."

Archival collections span widely, from one box to dozens. Often, each holds many folders, or even folders within sub-boxes. An electronic finding aid enables and eases digital access to a collection. Aisha Haykal, manager of archival services, and Georgette Mayo, processing archivist, guided us through the process of learning how to organize collections into inventories, then how to compose the components of their finding aids: abstracts, biographical/historical notes, collection overviews, suggested subject headings based on Library of Congress Authorities, and descriptions for each item in the collection.

We have also converted paper finding aids into electronic ones, processing them for eventual digital access. These projects have given us glimpses into the breadth of the Avery Research Center's collections through overlapping expanses of time and subject, which include The Holloway Family Scrapbook, 1776-1977; The Avery Normal Institute, 1865-1954; The Zion-Olivet Presbyterian Church Records Collection, 1854-1991; The McClennan-Banks Memorial Hospital Papers, 1898-1997; The McNeil and Richardson Family Records, tracing through the 1990s a history and lineage of Toby Richardson, an enslaved man who was brought to South Carolina in 1818, and his wife, Jane McNeil; and the Civil Rights legal work of attorney Armand Derfner, who has practiced law in Charleston since 1974.

Along the way, we have listened to oral histories and audio collections to find details missing from incomplete finding aids,

conducted research to verify certain details, and created collection inventories for them with different annotations: brief abstracts for oral history interviews and a list of subjects and special notes for audio collections. The difference in these inventories reflects the difference between the recordings. As the *Avery Oral History Workshop 2016: From Planning to Preservation* manual states, "Oral history is a sound recording of historical information, obtained through an interview that preserves a person's life history or eyewitness account of a past experience." Audio collections preserve contemporary recordings of lectures, speeches, group or panel discussions, musical performances, church sermons, etc. Beyond taking inventory, our work with oral histories has included transcription. We have edited and transcribed about thirty oral histories from cassette tapes and

CDs. These oral histories span several collections: interviews with sweetgrass basket makers; interviews, as recent as 2006, from Avery Normal Institute graduates who provide insights into Black family life in the first half of the twentieth century; interviews conducted between 1986 and 1997 of South Carolina Civil Rights activists on their upbringings, efforts in the movement, and the effects of gentrification.

To create a more complete historical picture of the Lowcountry, Ms. Haykal introduced us to the photographs and negatives from the Boags Modern Arts Photography Studio, once at 32 Spring Street, and the Coards Studio, once at 78 Line Street. We quantified these collections and qualified them based on size, pigment, and type (print or negative). Ms. Haykal further qualified these collections by prioritizing those negatives in deteriorating condition due to

age or exposure. Trained by Leah Worthington,

digital projects librarian at College of Charleston Libraries, we have begun to scan and digitize the negatives from these collections into a clear 16-bit grayscale for eventual display on the Lowcountry Digital Library. So far, our scans and digital renderings have revealed individuals and groups sitting for portraits, local African Methodist Episcopal church gatherings, Alpha Kappa Alpha functions from the 1950s and 1960s, funeral portraits, gravestones, cemetery landscapes, the contemporary architecture of buildings and whole streetscapes in Charleston, and landscapes just outside Charleston.

With greater knowledge through our work at the Avery Research Center, we have taken humble parts in the Avery Research Center's outreach and support for the Race and Social Justice Initiative (RSJI), launched in 2015 as a response to social inequities and acts of race-related violence in the Charleston area. As part of our duties, we assisted the RSJI coordinator, Daron Calhoun II, in planning an RSJI Student Leadership Awards event.

Our work has encouraged us to understand the demands the present makes on the past. Led by the staff of dedicated professionals at the Avery Research Center, we hope to have helped avail and advance resources from the past necessary to inform enduring efforts toward justice and equality.

Reported by Rucha Kamath, Thomas Ryan Coughlin, and Katherine Jones.



Avery Research Center Graduate Assistants  
(l-r) Thomas Ryan Coughlin, Rucha Kamath, Katherine Jones

# Dr. Patricia Williams Lessane

## A JOURNEY OF INNOVATION, SCHOLARSHIP, AND ADVOCACY

by Deborah A. Wright

Dr. Patricia Williams Lessane ended her nine-year tenure as executive director of the College of Charleston's Avery Research Center for African American History and Culture. Dr. Lessane is now the Associate Vice President for Academic

Affairs at Morgan State University in Baltimore, Maryland. Morgan State University is one of the top historically Black colleges and universities in the country.

During her time at the Avery Research Center, Dr. Lessane brought modernity and innovation. Her restructuring of alliances at the College of Charleston served to pull the Avery Research Center out

of its marginalized position and into the direct flow. An inventive approach to programming brought in powerhouse presentations, nontraditional conferences, and exhibitions. Additionally, she encouraged and promoted the uncelebrated skills and talents of the staff, recasting these talents in dynamic new endeavors. She promoted advocacy and activism among the College of Charleston faculty of color and other vulnerable identities, and she created more faculty positions at the Avery Research Center. Outside the College, Dr. Lessane retooled community relationships and put the Avery Research Center in national and international consciousness with a new generation of academic scholars and activists.

Dr. Lessane arrived at the Avery Research Center in August 2010 from Chicago, Illinois. Born and raised on the South Side of Chicago to Southern-born parents, she was the youngest of four children. In fact, she describes herself as being raised around older people and was "way younger" than her brothers and sisters. Her father died when she was five. An early reader who was always very bright, curious, and talkative, her parents encouraged her love of learning.

With much parental hard work and sacrifice, Dr. Lessane was able to attend high-level private schools during her formative years.

She later attended Fisk University, and was a straight "A" student, earning a Bachelor of Arts degree in English in 1992. After that, she entered the Master of Arts in Liberal Studies (MALS) Program at Dartmouth College, choosing African-American Studies and Women and Gender Studies programs as her concentrations. Interestingly, during that time, she analyzed and wrote about filmmaker Julie Dash and her seminal work, *Daughters of the Dust*, a relationship and subject she would later advance while at the Avery Research Center.

After receiving her MALS degree from Dartmouth in 1995, Dr. Lessane returned to Chicago and taught in Chicago State University's English Department while applying to PhD programs. Influenced by the work of anthropologists Katherine Dunham and Zora Neale Hurston, Dr. Lessane became intrigued with the field and decided anthropology would be her path. She attended the University of Illinois at Chicago, receiving her PhD in Cultural Anthropology in 2005. Patricia's focal point was religion, stating that while growing up and attending Baptist and Pentecostal churches, she loved the services, the spirit, and the music. She conducted her fieldwork in Salvador, Bahia, Brazil, on the Afro-Brazilian religious tradition of Candomblé.



Dr. Patricia Williams Lessane in the Avery Research Center's "Cox Gallery" during an outreach event held by the Black Googlers Network, August 2015.

**SCHOLARSHIP • INNOVATION**



Prior to applying for and accepting the job at the Avery Research Center, Dr. Lessane was in hustle mode, looking to relocate. She was married with two young children, teaching nights at Roosevelt University, and working in a contractual position at the Museum of Science and Industry on Black Creativity/Audience and Program Development. She saw the job listing for the Avery Research Center executive director position on a professional job board, posted by the late Dr. Conseula Francis. Dr. Lessane noted this job, “look[ed] like everything that I do, but at one place!”

But beyond the job description, Dr. Lessane didn’t really have a clue what to expect, “People I met with before coming to Avery had such scary stories about Avery and saying there was so much to be done and on and on.” Still, she felt excited, “I could bring my scholarship, my public programming hat, and my fundraising hat.” She recognized it was a big job overall and now, after the experience, feels the Avery Research Center, its value, its staff, and its collections have generally been downplayed.

at least learn the culture of the College in terms of institutional advancement, to try and work it to our advantage a little bit.” She also connected with people in the community and approached those who were not ordinarily sought for funding. “I think white people saw me as an anomaly, ‘Oh, it’s a Black person, talking about Black stuff, and she can talk to us’ and not pander to them.”

Some of her important accomplishments include fundraising successes; three major conferences; rare archival acquisitions; bringing the Faith and Politics Institute to the Avery Research Center; hosting visiting international scholar Dr. Sabine Broeck at the Avery

Research Center; having Tom Joyner at the Avery Research Center’s 35th Anniversary fundraiser program; spearheading the publication of three *South Carolina Black History Bugle* magazines; upgrading the *Avery Messenger* news magazine; securing a host of museum features, including the Lorenzo Dow Turner exhibit; presenting prominent speakers; and establishing the Race and Social Justice Initiative, including publishing the *Charleston County Racial Disparities Report*. And, of course, Dr. Lessane commissioned the iconic Bottle Tree statue standing majestically on the Avery Research Center’s front lawn!

In parting, Dr. Lessane shares a very crucial element about the Avery Research Center: “There is an intimacy that you develop in a place like Avery—a definite familial [relationship], a kinship, whether you want it or not, with the people who are actually vested in this experience, in the story, in the legacy—and the community expects everything from us, and we

have to deliver.”

Congratulations, Dr. Patricia Williams Lessane! We wish you well in all of your endeavors. Thank you for your dedication, your hard work, and for being vested in the Avery experience!



Dr. Patricia Williams Lessane welcoming the audience at the Race and Social Justice Initiative’s Lecture Series featuring Bryan Stevenson.



**“WE CARRY THESE MEMORIES...”**

Dr. Patricia Williams Lessane, with filmmaker Julie Dash, in front of the Avery Research Center Bottle Tree. Included in this group photo are some of the participants of the “We Carry These Memories Inside of We” symposium; *Daughters of the Dust* cast members, and Avery Research Center, College of Charleston faculty and staff members, September 2011.

One of the challenges Dr. Lessane faced was “the limited funds, the constant hustle to get more funds to do what we want to do, and having to be all things to so many people.” She indicated there are so many moving parts to Avery and people do not really recognize all that the Avery Research Center is, being a part of the College of Charleston and a historic Black institution. In order to generate funding support, Dr. Lessane shared, “I tried to

**ADVOCACY • ACTIVISM**

# THE PATH SHE PAVED FOR AVERY: THE A REFLECTION IN HER O

by Georgette



Dr. Myrtle G. Glascoe at the College of Charleston (Date unknown)

***The major thing that I was able to do was [to] bring the [Avery Research] Center into being, bring it from an idea to where it was actually alive, and that it was in the building that it wanted to be in.***

**–Dr. Myrtle G. Glascoe**

Beginning in February 1985, Myrtle Gonza Glascoe, EdD, a former Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee member, social worker, and educator took the reins as the first executive director for the College of Charleston's Avery Research Center for African American History and Culture. What laid before her were the numerous tasks of learning

about the Lowcountry, working with the Avery Institute of Afro-American History and Culture board and the College of Charleston administration, acquiring collections for the archives, and meeting the diverse residents of Charleston. Through these arduous charges, Dr. Glascoe excelled in establishing the Avery Research Center as the archives, museum, and center for public programming it remains today.

The following are highlights of Dr. Glascoe's tenure derived from an oral history interview with Ms. Deborah Wright on June 15, 2007. Dr. Glascoe's words are in italics. Within the narrative are abbreviated quotes from those who worked with her and knew her well.

## **The creation of the Avery Research Center as an archives, museum, and center for public programming**

*There was a plan for what they wanted to see happen at the Avery, and the idea of the Avery Institute for African American History and Culture [sic], which is the name of the organization, was that they wanted to see the Avery Building come back to life. They wanted inside that building an archives and a research center, so the plans were there. And I was the person who got started trying to bring that idea to life.*



(l-r) Eugene C. Hunt, Dr. Myrtle G. Glascoe, and Hon. Lucille S. Whipper at a reception for Dr. Glascoe at the Whipper residence, March 1985.

## **The motivation to bring the Avery Research Center into fruition**

The Honorable Lucille Whipper, the founding president of the Avery Institute of Afro-American History and Culture (1978-1984) when Dr. Glascoe was hired, expresses:

***She was the right person for the right time as we went into a "new venture" in establishing the Avery Research Center. Joining the College of Charleston with a historic Black institution was quite unusual. Dr. Glascoe's experience in "The Movement" prepared her to successfully join two diverse institutions in the struggle for racial equity in our country!***

Dr. Glascoe shares, *I caught the energy from Ms. Whipper. And the feeling I had was that we needed to do something that was going to make us known.*

## **Bringing the Avery Research Center to the community's awareness**

Dr. Glascoe's first major event as executive director for the Avery Research Center was to hold a conference on the work of African-American women in South Carolina. Upon obtaining a grant from the South Carolina Humanities, Dr. Glascoe organized and held the conference at Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church from February 28 to March 1, 1986. Noted women's scholar Dr. Beverly Guy-Sheftall was the conference's keynote speaker.



# THE LEGACY OF DR. MYRTLE G. GLASCOE

## OWN WORDS

ette Mayo

### Making the Avery Research Center inclusive

Dr. Glascoe expanded the Avery Research Center's collection scope to incorporate the culture and history of the Lowcountry region. Her first archival purchase in 1986 was the Guy and Candie Carawan Collection of audio and photographs that focuses on the Johns Island's African-American community, particularly its religious ceremonies, and children's songs and games.

*Because my position, in terms of the people, was that it was a blessing that the Avery folk had come to the conclusion that an archive[s] and museum was needed. But their version of it was to preserve a history of them and what they had done and what had grown out of their school. And they also acknowledged that it needed to be broader than that. You know, it needed to include the whole African-American community....As soon as the pictures were completed, the Johns Island people wanted to do an exhibit, you know, wanted to exhibit the pictures in their church. And so, I went out with them, and I sat with a group of folk from the island. And they had a plan for how they wanted to do it, and I worked with them as they did it. They came up with a title, and then they came up with words to say under each picture....The title of the exhibit was A Charge to Keep Have I.*



(l-r) Elmore Browne, Dr. Marlene O'Bryant-Seabrook, Oliver Smalls, Dr. Myrtle G. Glascoe, Dr. W. Marvin Dulaney, Curtis J. Franks at retirement party for Dr. Glascoe, 1993.

### Preserving Lowcountry history and culture

Dr. Glascoe continued to provide an inclusive history, capturing the stories of islanders living on James, Johns, and Wadmalaw Islands.

*The thing that I was concerned about was that we needed to document the uniqueness of the lives of people and the uniqueness of their speech patterns and their cultural patterns while we still could. And so, the time to do that is slipping away very quickly, and so I'm glad to hear that it's being started.... My task [was] to get out and discover what that was going to be about. And of course in the process of it all, you know, I got acquainted with the Gullah and the language and the ways of people. It was just a fascinating kind of experience.*

Curtis J. Franks, former curator and facilities manager of the Avery Research Center, held Dr. Glascoe in esteemed regard, "[Dr. Glascoe] possessed a strong sense of community and always treated people, regardless of their station in life, with genuine respect."

### The Connection of Sierra Leone and the Lowcountry Gullah Community

By making connections with Lowcountry islanders, Dr. Glascoe was able to ensure the Avery Research Center collected documents, images, and material culture that highlighted their region. During 1988-1989, Dr. Glascoe's exploration of the Lowcountry advanced her understanding of the cultural links between the United States and the Republic of Sierra Leone. Her meeting with Major General Joseph Saidu Momoh, president of Sierra Leone, validated the link between Lowcountry descendants and their Gullah language to West Africa. This encounter solidified her determination to extend her work and ensure that Avery had as much on Gullah and the Sea Island culture as possible. Dr. Glascoe became part of a delegation that traveled to Sierra Leone and was included in the documentary, *Family across the Sea*.

*Joseph Opala's work, as well as our visit and/or discovery of our identities along those lines, [were highlighted on the trip]. Alpha Bah (Director of the African Studies Program, College of Charleston) was there as a cultural attaché for us. Additionally, under Glascoe's tenure, anthropologist Colin M. Turnbull donated papers from him and his colleague Joseph Towles, whose research largely focused Mbuti people within the Ituri Rainforest, thus expanding the Avery Research Center's African collections.*

After serving eight years as the Avery Research Center's first executive director, Dr. Glascoe resigned in Spring 1993. She remained at the College to teach in the Education Department. Her legacy is the enduring path and mission she paved for the Avery Research Center, encompassing its former students and the Lowcountry community and preserving their history.



## SALUTING DR. MYRTLE G. GLASCOE

***"Her knowledge in both the Civil Rights Movement and the subject of Africanism, as well as the history of Black education in which [sic] we regularly talked about years after we both left the Avery [Research Center], contributed to our friendship. I will miss those conversations very much."***

—DONALD WEST, FORMER AVERY RESEARCH CENTER ARCHIVIST



***"She has always modeled for me the necessity of truth-telling and humble living committed to service."***

—MILLICENT E. BROWN, PhD, FORMER DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC PROGRAMS AND COMMUNITY EDUCATION AT THE AVERY RESEARCH CENTER

***"I envied [Dr. Glascoe] for being the first director of the Avery Research Center and for laying the groundwork that subsequent directors such as myself had to follow. Even today the Avery Research Center is one of her most important achievements and it reflects her personality. When I attended the 50th anniversary of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and encountered Dr. Glascoe there, I was both envious and humbled by the fact that she had been a part of one of the nation's greatest movements for social justice. I guess that I could say that while I was envious of Dr. Glascoe's achievements at Avery and in the movement, I also admired her for all that she did for so many in so many ways."***

—W. MARVIN DULANEY, FORMER EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE AVERY RESEARCH CENTER

### Avery Research Center as a Catalyst for Archival and Museum Careers

#### *An Interview with Jasmine Utsey, Museum Professional*

by Georgette Mayo

One of the many joys of working at the Avery Research Center is the opportunity to hire, educate, and encourage student workers. Upon graduation, many advance in higher education to obtain their doctorates in various fields. Some pursue careers in the archives, museums or cultural institutions.

Ms. Jasmine Utsey, a former Avery Research Center undergraduate student worker, graduated from the College of Charleston Class of 2008 with a BS Anthropology and has since acquired substantial experience in the museum world. Born in Greenville, South Carolina, and raised by parents who are educators, visiting museums and historical sites were part of Utsey's youth, which left a lasting impression.

I interviewed Utsey at the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture where she is the program manager for business operations. Through her considerable involvement with cultural institutions, Utsey shares her professional journey, imparting sage advice for those seeking to become a museum professional.

#### ***The following is an abbreviated version of our interview.***

Utsey's interest in the museum profession developed while at the College of Charleston. Originally a Biology major, she changed to Anthropology and participated in field experiences with the Charleston Museum's historical archaeology field school and the Penn Center's cultural heritage preservation workshop on St. Helena Island, South Carolina. Additional courses in African American Studies, including visiting historian Dr. Darlene Clark Hine's course on African-American Women's History, increased Utsey's interest.

Prior to her graduation, Utsey worked at the Avery Research Center during the 2008 spring semester. Utsey immediately impressed our staff with her determination, willingness to learn, and ability to complete assigned tasks. She expresses, "I was eager to learn all that I could to get a sense of the different skill sets that a museum requires of its personnel to operate successfully. I did every possible task that I could get my hands on, like working at the front desk and gift shop, giving tours of the building, answering visitors' questions, and other tasks. It was a wonderful experience and is very special to me as it was my first experience working in a museum."

In fall of 2008, Utsey started at the Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage (CFCH) as a research intern and later as a liaison and administrative coordinator for the upcoming summer festival program, "Giving Voice: The Power of Words in African American Culture." Utsey returned in 2010 as assistant to the acting festival director, supporting the coordination of three festival programs and the annual Ralph Rinzler Memorial Concert. The programs featured México, Asian Pacific Americans, and Smithsonian Inside Out, and required her to be on the festival grounds to support curatorial, technical, programmatic, and administrative activities. "My experience at CFCH was a wonderful entrée to cultural program management."

In 2010, Utsey enrolled in the Public Humanities and Cultural Heritage Master's Program at Brown University. She was awarded the Public History of Slavery Fellowship, which prepares future professionals to assist museums and cultural institutions address controversial issues, and teach the public and initiate broad conversations about slavery, race and racism, and retrospective justice.

Many of the classes Utsey selected were rooted in slavery with an emphasis in museum and arts management, exhibition development, leadership, and oral history. "I'm a very hands-on learner, so it was a great experience because we were encouraged to conduct two practicums and work collaboratively on group student projects in the local communities. Additionally, Utsey completed practicums at the Museum of African American History in Boston and the National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC) in Washington, DC.

Presently, Utsey is the program manager for business operations with the NMAAHC, which oversees the Sweet Home Café and the Museum Store. Functioning as the liaison between the museum and Smithsonian Enterprises, which is the revenue-generating entity of the Smithsonian Institution, Utsey's role falls within the Department of Operations in the Facilities Planning & Business Programs unit. Prior to the museum's opening, Utsey's numerous tasks entailed managing aspects of product and menu development, leading review sessions of product concepts with curators and directors, coordinating food tastings, and determining floor plans and crowd flows. With NMAAHC heading into its third year, Utsey's role has expanded to overseeing

daily operations, monitoring and tracking facilities/ maintenance needs, and working closely with her colleagues in various departments including public programs, Information Technology (IT), visitor services, and marketing.

Museums provide a lens into our society—past and present—and many cultural institutions strive to be on the cutting edge of future trends. Current topics Utsey follows are: *Universities exploring their historical connections to slavery; removing Confederate statues and memorials and how communities will seek to reinterpret public spaces; and, revitalizing abandoned or dilapidated public structures.* Utsey shares, "Personally, I am excited about the renovation of the Rosenwald School in St. George. My family lives in St. George and my grandmother attended school there in the 1930s-1940s. As a child, I used to ride my bicycle by the school, believing it would make such an amazing museum. I am happy that it's being restored."



(l-r) Georgette Mayo and Jasmine Utsey in Utsey's office at the NMAAHC.

Utsey offered this advice for people of color seeking a career in museums: *Museums seek and need candidates with a variety of skills. Be open to exploring different career paths within museums. Do not narrow your scope solely on curatorial work or research because museums require much more than that to function (i.e. engineers, architects, lawyers, educators, STEM majors, business majors); Network and seek out mentors. Remember to keep in touch, update mentors on your progress, and always send a "thank you" note; Don't give up! The field can be very competitive and hard to get a foot in the door, but be creative. Volunteer, intern, and request informational interviews. You never know what may open up.*

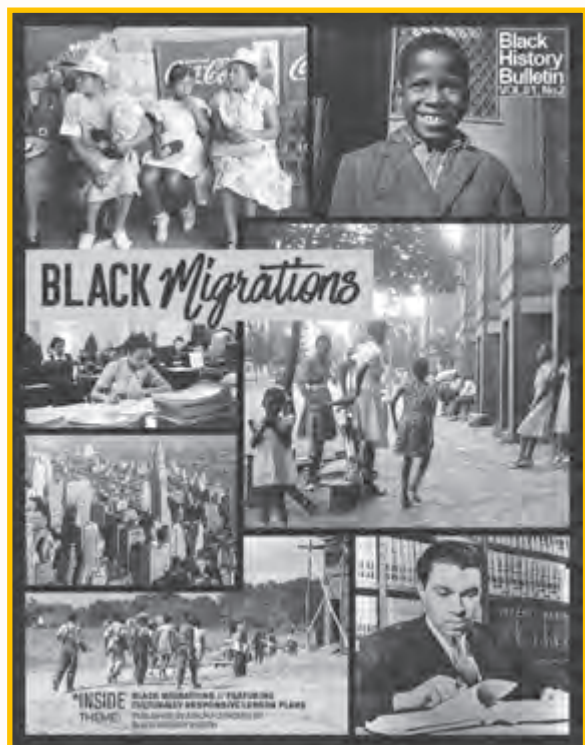


# News Briefs

Reported by Aisha Haykal, Georgette Mayo

**THE ASSOCIATION FOR THE STUDY OF AFRICAN AMERICAN LIFE AND HISTORY'S (ASALH) 104TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE BEING HOSTED BY THE CHARLESTON AREA BRANCH ASALH. OCTOBER 2-6, 2019 • EMBASSY SUITES BY HILTON IN NORTH CHARLESTON, SC**

**The 2019 ASALH Conference theme “Black Migrations” spotlights movement to new destinations and subsequently changed social realities for people of African descent.** While inclusive of earlier periods and global spaces, this theme centers the American twentieth and twenty-first centuries. African-American migration patterns included relocation from Southern farms to Southern cities; the transition from the South to the Northeast, Midwest, and West and from the Caribbean to US cities; along with African-American emigration to Africa and to European cities, such as Paris and London, in the post-world war periods. These multifaceted migrations resulted in a more diverse and stratified interracial and intra-racial urban population amid a changing social milieu. Migrations cultivated Garvey movements in New York, Detroit, and New Orleans; the emergence of both Black industrial workers and Black entrepreneurs; the growing number and variety of urban churches and new religions; new music forms like ragtime, blues, and jazz; white backlash demonstrated in the 1919 Red Summer; the blossoming of visual and literary arts, as in New York, Washington, DC, Chicago, and Paris in the 1910s and 1920s; and much more. The theme Black Migrations equally lends itself to the exploration of other spatial and social perspectives, with attention to “new” African Americans because of the burgeoning African and Caribbean population in the US; African Americans’ return to the South; racial suburbanization; inner-city hyperghettoization; health and environment; civil rights and protest activism; electoral politics; mass incarceration; and dynamic cultural production. 2019 also commemorates 400 years of perseverance against enslavement. As such, the committee called for panels and papers that more fully interrogate this legacy of kidnapping and forced migration while honoring the resistance and resilience of Black people throughout the diaspora.



The 2019 Program Committee sought a diverse slate of presenters and panels representing a variety of professional and institutional backgrounds, perspectives, and voices. The committee particularly sought presentations that probe the traditional fields of economic, political, diplomatic, intellectual, and cultural history; the established fields of urban, race, ethnic, labor, and women's/gender history, as well as Southern, Appalachian, and Western history. Additionally, the rapidly expanding fields of sexuality, LGBT, and queer history; environmental and public history; African-American intellectual history; carceral state studies; and transnational and global studies across all fields, topics, and thematic emphases were requested.

Scholars working across a variety of temporal, geographical, thematic, and topical areas in Black history, life and culture will present at the ASALH conference. We seek to foster a space of inclusion in the ASALH program and encouraged historians, students, new professionals, first-time presenters, activists, and practitioners from allied professions to be speakers.

Visit <https://www.facebook.com/groups/asalhcharleston/> for more information.

## THE GULLAH SOCIETY

Founded by Ade Ofunniyin, PhD, the Gullah Society was created "to preserve, promote, and perpetuate Gullah Geechee culture and traditions." The Gullah Society has currently undertaken the multi-layered Anson Street Burial Ground Project. The 2013 unearthing of the eighteenth-century Anson Street African burial ground during



Dr. Ade Ofunniyin (left) at the Ancestral Reburial Celebration, May 2019.

construction at the Gaillard Center set in motion a series of projects that included archaeological analysis, DNA research, community involvement, art and education initiatives, and memorialization and ceremonial remembrance programming.

An Ancestral Reburial Celebration was held on May 4, 2019, to pay homage and reinter the remains of the thirty-six people excavated in 2013. Collaborations with the Gullah Society for the project include the City of Charleston and the Center for the Study of Slavery in Charleston-College of Charleston. Speakers included Charleston

Mayor John Tecklenburg, Representative Wendell G. Gilliard, clergy, and educators Dr. Millicent Brown and Minerva King. Performance artists included Ann Caldwell and the Magnolia Singers and students from the WatotoAcademy of the Performing Arts for Youth. Other activities that preceded the program were a naming ceremony and a discussion about DNA by Dr. Theodore Schurr and Ms. Raquel Fleskes, genetic anthropologists at the University of Pennsylvania.

Visit <http://www.thegullahsociety.com/> for more information.

## CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF SLAVERY IN CHARLESTON AT THE COLLEGE OF CHARLESTON



Dr. Bernard Powers, professor emeritus of history at the College of Charleston.

Headed by Dr. Bernard E. Powers Jr., the Center for the Study of Slavery in Charleston at the College of Charleston "examines the impact of slavery and race-related issues and their legacies in Charleston, the region, and at the College of Charleston, from the later eighteenth-century era to the present." In Fall 2018, the College joined the Universities Studying Slavery Consortium, which consists of approximately forty higher-educational institutions that aim to address historical and contemporary economic and racial inequalities that stem from the legacy of slavery.

The Center has an executive board of College stakeholders and four working committees composed of staff, faculty, students, and community on public history, research, K-12 education, and socioeconomic justice. To activate the mission, the Center has collaborated with the Gullah Society on the Anson Street African Burial Ground, the Carolina Lowcountry and Atlantic World Program, and various College departments. The Center has applied for federal grant funds to do innovative and engaging activities around the mission.

Visit <http://academicaffairs.cofc.edu/centers/study-of-slavery-in-charleston> for more information.

## AVERY INSTITUTE MEMBERSHIP NEWS

**TONY BELL,**  
Membership  
Chairman



Greetings from  
the Membership  
Committee!

This year, we have continued our mission to modernize our membership activities by updating our data. Specifically, we have been asking for email addresses so we can streamline our communication efforts.

In March, we mailed a postcard to collect as many email addresses as possible; so if you received one, please return it with your updated information as soon as possible. We have also been auditioning several web-based donation platforms this year in an effort to grow our membership and make the process of giving more efficient. The Avery Institute Membership Roll Call and Memorials are also being updated and will return next issue.

Roughly half of the current board members' terms are up for renewal at this year's annual meeting in June. The members are as follows: Minerva Brown-King, Rick Gutowski, Roslyn Harper, Charles McKenzie, Barbara V. Nelson, Tony Bell, John Buncum, and Priscilla Robinson.

Also, visit us online at:  
[www.averyinstitute.us](http://www.averyinstitute.us).

Best,  
Tony Bell





# RACE AND SOCIAL JUSTICE INITIATIVE UPDATE

by Thomas Coughlin and Jeniah Hunter

**In January 2019, the Race and Social Justice Initiative (RSJI) selected five College of Charleston undergraduates and two graduate students to receive a 2018-2019 Student Leadership Award (SLA), a \$600 travel and research stipend for each student's project in race and social justice activism.**

In its second year, this award aims to confront systemic problems both on campus and throughout the Lowcountry. With the support of RSJI, these students and their projects are researching and challenging the status quo on a number of issues: AIDS and public health, biking and transportation, racial reconciliation in an international context, complacency and opposition to Black Lives Matter, increasing the number of Black women in public office, environmental racism, and the theory and practice of community development.

## THE AWARDEES

**Vanity Reid Deterville**, a junior majoring in Political Science with a concentration in Public Policy, applied her award to attending AIDSWatch: AIDS United Annual Conference in Washington DC, which will inform Deterville's work in HIV/AIDS policy to develop community collaboration to combat and treat HIV/AIDS in Charleston and the Lowcountry.

**Sylvie Baele**, a candidate for Master of Public Administration, Nonprofit Management, also traveled to Washington, DC for the 2019 National Bike Summit hosted by the League for American Bicyclists. Baele wants to learn the best ways to encourage and increase biking "for college students and minority populations in the area, specifically those who are negatively affected by gentrification, urban food deserts, and unequal housing and employment opportunities."

**Thomasena Thomas**, also a junior studying Political Science-Public Policy, traveled to Rwanda last December to engage in international missionary work, which Thomas credits with giving her "insight into the nation's reconciliation process following the tragic Rwandan genocide of 1994." Thomas notes the relevance of her lessons to the community here on campus, saying of her interactions with Rwandans, "Above all, they strive for oneness."



(l-r) Sylvie Baele, Malayna Nesbitt, Allie Stern, Dr. Patricia Williams Lessane, Ethan Davis, KaMar Galloway (Google representative), Vanity Deterville, Thomasena Thomas, Ebony Venson, Daron Lee Calhoun II.

Senior **Allie Stern** studies Public Health and planned the program "Black Lives Matter: Looking at Charleston," which Stern designed to draw local attention to police brutality and race-based violence. The program brought together students and community members for a speakers' forum with local artists and activists, and provided campus and community resources for attendees to involve themselves in race and social justice activism.

In another related node of empowerment, **Ebony Venson**, candidate for Master of Public Administration, attended a Taste of Emerge training session sponsored by Emerge America, an organization that recruits, trains, and connects "Democratic women from diverse backgrounds" to seek and win public office. Venson conducted research on barriers that affect the electoral success of Black women in politics. Coupling her research and travel, Venson "hope[s] to expand [her] knowledge on creating an environment for Black women to run, win and lead."

**Malayna Nesbitt**, a junior majoring in Public Health and minoring in African American Studies, traveled throughout the Lowcountry visiting facilities and organizations that study and work to resolve the harms of environmental racism, particularly the health disparities in minority communities. Along the way, Nesbitt interviewed Lowcountry residents affected by these injustices with an eye to "inform and engage the community, particularly those who do not experience these disparities," as well as to suggest solutions toward ending environmental degradation and relieving those whom current environmental policy degrades the most.

**Ethan Davis**, a senior pursuing a double major in African American Studies and Political Science with a minor in Jewish History, outlined a project that combines theory and practice of community development. Davis conducted secondary research to form a theoretical framework for community development and then analyzed prevailing methods among researchers who write on imperiled communities. Extending this analysis, Davis conducted on-the-ground dialogues with residents of Chicora in North Charleston, whose often-unheard perspectives Davis will advance to incorporate suggestions for "best practices" of community development.

**The 2018-2019 SLA recipients presented the findings from their travel and research projects at our second annual symposium on April 23, 2019, in Addlestone Library at the College of Charleston.**



# Avery Research Center Returns in 2019!

## WE ARE CLOSER TO REOPENING THE BUILDING!

Currently, walls are being repainted and the floors are being sanded. New windows have already been installed, and state-of-the-art archival shelves have been ordered to maximize space and adhere to archival best practices.

To stay up to date on opening date progress, visit us on Facebook at  
<https://www.facebook.com/averyresearchcenter>.

## STAY TUNED



*Avery Research Center building renovation photos  
by Daron Lee Calhoun II*

## Avery Institute of Afro-American History and Culture Hosts Second Annual Kentucky Derby Fundraising Event

On May 4, 2019, the Avery Institute of Afro-American History and Culture's (AIAAHC) Board of Directors hosted its Second Annual Kentucky Derby Fundraising Event. Held in the McAlister Hospitality Suite in the College of Charleston's TD Arena, the fundraiser included food and beverages, live entertainment, and a silent auction.

Additionally, Ms. Barbara Wilson presented the Avery Institute with a monetary gift in memory of deceased Averyite, Mrs. Lavinia Dash.

AIAAHC provides support to the Avery Research Center's programs and operations.

Visit <http://www.averyinstitute.us> to become a member and for more information.



Avery Institute of Afro-American History and Culture Board of Directors at the May 2019 Kentucky Derby event.  
(l-r) Daniel E. Martin Jr., Esq., Walter G. Brown Jr., Rick Gutowski, Minerva T. King, Kimberly Greene, Kathy E. Smalls, Barbara V. Nelson, Roslyn J. Harper, Yvette Metz, Catherine E. Boags, Priscilla McLeod Robinson, Vicki Davis Williams, John P. Buncum Jr., Tony Bell, Charles E. McKenzie. Photo by Cleven Brown





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## Avery Research Center Bottle Tree



Commissioned by Dr. Patricia Williams Lessane, the Bottle Tree on the lawn of the Avery Research Center, installed in 2011, is a permanent sculpture inspired by the twentieth anniversary of the groundbreaking film, *Daughters of the Dust*, and its examination of the Gullah Geechee traditions. The Bottle Tree was blessed and bottles were placed on its branches during the "We Carry These Memories Inside of We" conference. (Bottle Tree Sculptor: Jean-Marie Mauclet; Consultant: Arianne King-Comer, Textile Artist)